



Travel Management Plan Leverages Funds for Road Decommissioning

- 2007-present
- Medicine Bow National Forest, Laramie Ranger District
- Partners: See page 2

Project description

Based on a District-wide travel management plan, the Medicine Bow National Forest has begun decommissioning 292 miles of unnecessary and undesirable roads and OHV trails in the Eastern Snowy Range. Working with National Forest allocations, significant grant funds, and in-kind services and support from partners, in 2008 Laramie Ranger District decommissioned over six times the entire Forest's prior annual average road decommissioning accomplishment.

The Eastern Snowy Range Travel Management analysis covered 520 square miles and outlined specific roads to decommission to enhance fish and wildlife habitat and water quality, a recommended system of necessary roads to maintain, and construction of OHV trails. Forest staff realized that under normal funding scenarios it would take 30 years to complete the decommissioning portion of the work. By pursuing a partnership of significant funding sources and in-kind services, the Forest expects to complete the majority of road decommissioning in just three years. The Legacy Roads and Trails program is an important component of the funding package.



Wetland crossing fill, before and after removal.
Photo credits: Top: Dave Gloss. Bottom: Laura Jungst

Decommissioning treatment methods include signing, fencing, placement of debris, construction of berms, removal of fill from wetlands and valley bottoms, and reconstruction of stream channels. Most decommissioned routes were ripped to a depth of 12-18 inches to reduce soil compaction, improve infiltration and allow vegetation to become reestablished. At stream and wetland crossings where road fill was interfering with stream or wetland function, fill was removed and the site was restored to a more natural state. Twelve miles of road were decommissioned during 2007 and 131 miles of roads were decommissioned in 2008. Approximately 49 percent, (143 miles out of a total of 292 miles) of total road and trail miles have been completed in the first two seasons of this project.

Benefits

Decommissioning work resulted in improvements to 88 stream crossings, rehabilitation and improvement of 60 wetlands, and improved wildlife habitat on 45,879 acres. The benefits are considerable and include improvements to water quality and aquatic habitat, restoration of wetlands and habitat for endemic plant and animal species—all key interests for project partners and funders.

Keys to success

“Having a large-scale, comprehensive travel management plan in place is one key to our success in attracting internal and external funding, as well as labor and other support from partners,” says Forest Hydrologist Dave Gloss. “I was able to leverage the plan to secure large grants and allocations, rather than spending the same amount of time on securing smaller contributions. When our partners saw the benefits of the project and significant funding available from the Legacy Roads and Trails program, they were willing to provide matching funds.”

Types of agreements

Challenge Cost Share Agreement with Wyoming Conservation Corps
Standard FS Grant Agreements with grantors

Project costs and contributions

The majority of work completed in 2008 utilized National Forest system funds, primarily Legacy Roads and Trails money, which Congress appropriated specifically to decommission unnecessary and/or undesired roads on National Forest lands. Most work was accomplished by Medicine Bow-Routt National Forest employees. This included heritage and botany surveys, laying out prescribed decommissioning treatments, and operation of heavy equipment to decommission the roads.

Significant grant funding was obtained in 2008 from the Wyoming Wildlife Natural Resource Trust fund (\$127,250), Environmental Protection Agency – Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality Clean Water Act Section 319 (\$59,140) and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (\$5,000). Due to the significant allocation of 2008 National Forest monies to this project, very little grant money was utilized for the project during 2008. Use of grant funds is expected to increase significantly in future years.

In-kind partner contributions:

- Laramie Rivers Conservation District in 2008 provided heavy equipment and an operator to decommission some roads.
- Wyoming Conservation Corps crews spent a 10-day work period assisting with fencing, erosion control and other hand crew work.
- Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Wyoming State Trails, Trout Unlimited, and the Biodiversity Conservation Alliance provided letters of support.

Estimated savings

“We expect this project to cost \$500,000 when complete. Half of that amount will come from our partners in the form of grants and in-kind services,” says Gloss.

More information

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[Eastern Snowy Range Travel Management Road Decommissioning Accomplishment Report](#)
[pdf]

Find this story and more at the Partnership Resource Center website: <http://www.partnershipresourcecenter.org/roads/success-stories.php>

This story produced by the FS Grant Strategists Enterprise Unit for the San Dimas Technology & Development Center

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